

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JOHN P. SARBANES

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 28, 2007

Mr. SARBANES. Madam Speaker, on vote No. 563, an amendment offered by Mr. ANDREWS, I was recorded as "nay." I intended to be recorded as "aye." I thank the Speaker for providing me with the opportunity to correct the record.

 TRIBUTE TO VASIL AND
FLORENCE RUCHO
HON. JAMES P. McGOVERN

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 28, 2007

Mr. McGOVERN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Vasil and Florence Rucho of West Boylston, MA, on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary. Mr. and Mrs. Rucho's life together exemplifies the finest qualities of the institution of marriage, and their commitment to their family, their faith and each other should serve as an example to us all.

Vasil married the former Florence George at St. Nicholas Romanian Orthodox Church on June 30, 1957. The young couple met while working at the Table Talk Pie Company in Worcester, MA, and romance soon blossomed. Shortly thereafter, they married and were blessed with two wonderful children, Melanie and Christopher.

Despite the demands of raising a young family, Vas and Flo always found time to help others and gave freely to their church, their family and their friends. They never failed to lend a helping hand to a neighbor in need, and were there to celebrate the joyous moments as well as to lessen the burden in times of pain and sorrow.

Together Vas and Flo share an extraordinary work ethic and devotion to their family that is altogether too rare in these more modern times. After they were married, Vas continued to work at the Table Talk Pie Company while taking on a second job at the family business, Dian's Flower Shop. Mrs. Rucho was widely known in the close-knit Main South neighborhood as one of the first women to work at the local McDonalds. Her friendly face and warm smile graciously welcomed countless families that came to dine at the restaurant. Despite their rigorous work schedules, Vas and Flo made certain that every summer their family vacationed together with friends on Cape Cod for 2 weeks. Those vacations are fondly remembered by all.

In later years as their children married, Vas and Flo became "Maya" and "Papu" to their five beautiful grandchildren. Their daughter Melanie and her husband Fr. Peter have two children, Nicholas and Alexandra. Their son Christopher and his wife Julie have three sons, Matthew, Brian and William. Family dinners at Vas and Flo's home are a feast to savor. Neighbors and family members alike eagerly look forward to the magnificent array of Christmas decorations adorning their yard each holiday season. For Vasil and Florence, there is no greater joy in life than to be sur-

rounded by their children and grandchildren, especially during the holidays.

Madam Speaker, too often in this Chamber we take notice of world leaders and historic events without recognizing the families that are truly the bedrock of America. Vasil and Florence Rucho have together over half a century demonstrated they are one such family. It gives me great pleasure to humbly ask that the United States House of Representatives join me in congratulating Vasil and Florence Rucho on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary. I look forward to joining them and the entire Rucho family this Saturday evening, June 30, at a celebration in honor of this tremendous milestone in their remarkable life together.

 THE MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE
CORPORATION IN AFRICA
HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 28, 2007

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, this afternoon the Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health held a hearing on the Millennium Challenge Corporation in Africa. The MCC program, which was announced by President Bush on March 14, 2002 and established in January 2004, marked an incredible new approach to U.S. foreign assistance. It is based on the principle that assistance is most effective when it promotes good governance, investments in people, and economic freedom. Its goal is to reduce global poverty through the promotion of sustainable economic growth.

Grants from the Millennium Challenge Account are limited to countries with a per capita income less than \$3,465. In addition, eligible countries must have an established record that satisfies 16 performance indicators in the three areas I just noted. One of the most important is a pass/fail test for fighting corruption. Seven grants—called compacts—have been signed so far for countries in Africa, with a total value of about \$2.4 billion. Additional compacts are pending for the Continent.

The establishment of the Millennium Challenge Account is innovative in several respects. For one, it mandates that program proposals be developed solely by qualified countries themselves with the involvement of a broad base of their civil society. It also provides assistance to countries without regard to U.S. strategic foreign policy objectives, providing an opportunity to countries that may normally be overlooked by the United States as well as other bilateral donors. However, it cannot be said that the MCC for that reason does not serve U.S. interests. In fact, authentic development as envisioned by the MCC principle leads to a more prosperous, peaceful, and just world for all of us.

Finally, I would assert that MCC is most laudable because it recognizes the potential of the poor to lift themselves and their country out of the clutches of poverty if they are provided with the necessary infrastructure and tools. An important correlative to this is the incentive provided by MCC to the recipient country's government to focus on and respond to the needs of the poor segment of their population. The MCC provides an important means of empowerment for those who have the greatest difficulty attaining it.

A glance at the various compacts and threshold programs in Africa highlights the extraordinary needs and the necessity of expanding those programs. The subcommittee held a hearing on Africa's water crisis just a few weeks ago on May 16th, where we lamented the fact that over 1.1 billion people in developing countries do not have adequate access to safe water and approximately 2.6 billion people live without basic sanitation. We heard testimony that the reasons for these deficiencies are rooted in inequalities. The poor not only have significantly less access to water, but even when they do have access, they pay significantly more for it. The MCC with its focus on programming for the poor is one mechanism that the United States is utilizing to address this issue at its root cause.

On the political level, it is worth noting that our parliamentary colleagues in developing countries do not always have the resources they need to fulfill their role in a democracy. The MCC threshold program in Malawi will provide the National Assembly of that country with the capacity for all 13 committees to meet and perform their oversight function—a first in Malawi's history.

As with all new programs, the MCC has encountered challenges in Africa that we examined in the course of the hearing. One of the greatest has been providing disbursements in a timely manner while ensuring accountability and sustainability. Another that we are encountering time and again in numerous development efforts for Africa, including programs for HIV/AIDS, is partner country capacity. It is extremely difficult to implement country-driven initiatives when the country itself is lacking educated, experienced personnel to do the work. However, neither of these or other challenges warrant scaling back on MCC programming, but instead provide the opportunity to search for solutions to these issues together with the recipient country government as well as other bilateral and multilateral assistance donors. The MCC is not the total solution to African development, but it is an important and significant contribution, both in terms of resources and philosophy, to a more global strategy.

 VETERANS EDUCATION TUITION
SUPPORT ACT OF 2007
HON. SUSAN A. DAVIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 28, 2007

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Veterans Education Tuition Support Act of 2007 or the VETS Act to address some of the difficulties our military personnel when they are activated while attending college.

Thousands of military reservists have been activated to fight in Iraq and Afghanistan directly from their college campuses. Unfortunately, students who serve in the military face unique hardships when called upon to defend the United States.

Most colleges and universities refund tuition and fees to students when the activation occurs during the academic calendar. However, instances have occurred when a servicemember has not been reimbursed.

Servicemembers have also been known to face difficulties reregistering for classes after